

Sept 11, 2006

The Newton Department of Health and Human Services is working with other local towns to mobilize volunteers for a Medical Reserve Corps that would assist in the event of a health emergency.

Disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, tsunamis and the September 11 terrorist attacks have made communities all the more aware of the need for an organized group of qualified volunteers who are prepared to help. Future needs may include flu pandemic or bioterrorism. With this in mind, the Newton Department of Health and Human Services would like to identify, credential and train as many volunteers as possible. Nurses, physicians, pharmacists and those with experience in public health, mental health and allied health professionals are urged to volunteer.

Information sessions will be held in Newton on Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:30am and Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-7:30pm. Additional sessions will be held in Arlington on Thursday, September 21 from 6:00- 7:30pm; Brookline on Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-8:30pm; Watertown on Wednesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> from 3:00-4:30pm; and Belmont on Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-8:30pm. Volunteers may choose to attend a session in their town or another town. For directions and to RSVP, please contact Alison Minkoff at (617) 665-3871 or [aminkoff@challiance.org](mailto:aminkoff@challiance.org).

Recognizing that many professionals have limited time to volunteer, the Newton Department of Health and Human Services encourages Medical Reserve Corps members to choose their level of participation. Volunteers may elect to serve their community both during emergencies and for more routine public health needs such as immunization clinics, screenings and health education, or strictly during emergencies. Because Newton is working in cooperation with 27 area communities to share resources, volunteers may also choose to serve only in their town or as part of the regional Medical Reserve Corps.

The other towns are all part of Massachusetts Public Health Region 4b\*, which encompasses 27 cities and towns and 981,000 residents. The Region 4b Medical Reserve Corps will be a cadre of trained volunteers from communities in the region who will work with medical, public health and other local emergency responders to guarantee a timely and harmonized volunteer response for local and regional public health emergencies.

Medical Reserve Corps, a component of USA Freedom Corps, was created in 2002 to promote and organize volunteerism and service in the United States. While the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General oversees the national network of MRC volunteers, there are more than 200 MRC units throughout the nation. Each unit is organized locally to ensure that individual community needs are addressed.

More specific examples of practicing and retired professionals who are encouraged to volunteer include: physicians, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, epidemiologists, health educators, psychologists, social workers, chaplains, language interpreters, lawyers, funeral directors and administrators. Medical, public health, and other allied health professionals are also encouraged to apply. United States citizenship is not required to be a Medical Reserve Corps volunteer.

For more information, contact David Naparstek, Commissioner at (617) 796-1420 or Minkoff.

\*Communities in Region 4b are: Arlington, Belmont, Braintree, Brookline, Cambridge, Canton, Chelsea, Cohasset, Everett, Dedham, Hanover, Hingham, Hull, Milton, Needham, Newton, Norwell, Norwood, Quincy, Revere, Scituate, Somerville, Watertown, Wellesley, Westwood, Weymouth and Winthrop.